

The bill authorizes \$50 million for the Secretary of Homeland Security to create a research and development program to improve freight and intercity passenger rail security. The Secretary of Homeland Security is also required to develop a national plan for public outreach and awareness and a study on passenger, baggage, and cargo screening.

Moreover, the Rail Security Act of 2005 focuses on an issue that security bills often ignore: the importance of ensuring that key workers have the support and training required to protect our rail system, whether those workers are railroad employees or emergency responders.

Rail workers are truly the eyes and ears of the rail industry. They greet passengers, sell tickets, operate trains, maintain track and signal systems, dispatch trains, operate bridges, and repair cars. They are in the most direct position to spot security risks and potential threats. This bill requires rail carriers to provide security training to these workers to ensure that they are prepared to take appropriate action against threat conditions. The bill also strengthens whistleblower protections to ensure that workers who report or identify a security risk will not face retribution or retaliation from their employers. A rail worker should not have to "choose between doing the right thing on security and holding on to his or her job. Despite whistleblower protections in current law, employees still experience employer harassment and intimidation when reporting accidents, injuries, and other safety concerns. This language will help ensure that these practices end.

Congressmen HENRY WAXMAN, ELIJAH CUMMINGS, and I asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2002 to examine ten communities to evaluate whether they were prepared to respond to rail incidents involving hazardous materials, whether accidental or intentional. Accidents in urban areas, such as the 2001 occurrence in the Howard Street Tunnel in Baltimore, Maryland, involving a fire fueled by hazardous materials, and a leak of hydrochloric acid from a parked tank car in an urban area in Lowell, Massachusetts, have called attention to the safety of hazardous materials shipped by rail. The recent tragedy in Graniteville, South Carolina showed the devastating effects such hazmat accidents can cause.

To my disappointment, GAO found that many emergency responders were not properly trained to respond to incidents involving hazardous materials and radioactive waste. In each of the ten Communities evaluated, local fire department officials confirmed that fire department personnel had only received hazardous material awareness-level training, the lowest level of training recommended in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 472, Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents. This training provides first responders with the knowledge and skills to identify a hazardous materials incident and to contact the appropriate response resource. However, NFPA representatives have advised me that the minimum level of training for first responders should actually be at the operations level, the second highest level of training described in NFPA Standard 472, which trains responders to plan and initiate a response to the incident. The Rail Security Act of 2005 requires this training.

GAO also found that while most local communities have equipment on hand to use in response to a hazardous material incident, some locations lacked important equipment, such as detectors, decontamination equipment, and personal protective gear needed to respond to accidents involving hazardous materials and radioactive waste. My bill addresses this need. It authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to make grants to State and local governments, as well as nonprofit employee organizations representing emergency responders, for advanced firefighter turnout gear.

The Rail Security Act of 2005 also ensures that emergency responders will be able to get real-time information for dealing with hazardous materials and passenger railroad incidents through the Operation Respond Institute. The bill provides Operation Respond with \$2.5 million for each of fiscal years 2005 through 2007 for deploying and expanding the Operation Respond Emergency Information System software, developing and implementing a railroad infrastructure mapping program, and establishing an alert and messaging capability for use during emergencies involving freight and passenger railroads.

The Rail Security Act of 2005 includes legislation that the House has overwhelmingly passed in previous Congresses, the Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act, which ensures that the needs of the families of the victims of terrorist attacks or accidents are addressed. This bill was similar to legislation we enacted in 1996 to address the treatment of families of the victims of airline crashes. We should do no less for those who ride our nation's passenger trains.

As we introduce this bill today, we invite other colleagues to join us in co-sponsorship and work together to ensure its passage.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 57th anniversary of Israel's independence.

Today we celebrate the realization of a two thousand year old Jewish dream to return to the ancient kingdom of Israel. Centuries of persecution and propaganda gave this dream a sense of urgency and, at the end of the Nineteenth Century, Theodor Herzl and other Jewish leaders throughout the world mobilized to establish a new Jewish state. Their dream inspired persecuted Jews throughout the world to courageously find refuge in Palestine in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Without their bravery and determination, the rebirth of Israel never would have been possible. The unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust further cemented the necessity of a Jewish state, and Israel was finally established as a sovereign and independent nation on May 14, 1948.

The State of Israel was founded on the ideals of pluralism, freedom, and human rights and has maintained these democratic ideals in the face of war, terrorism, and frequent diplomatic isolation. Israel has served as a beacon of democracy in the Middle East and its shared values with the United States has led

to a natural kinship between the two nations. We have maintained a strong alliance with Israel based on friendship, principles, strategy, and a commitment to defeat terror.

Israel's determination to maintain its democratic principles in the face of relentless threats to its citizens has been admirable. We salute this accomplishment and we must work with Israel to defeat terrorist threats to the institutions that nurture democracy and prosperity in our two countries and throughout the world.

Since we celebrated this day a year ago, Israel has experienced an increased sense of optimism for the achievement of a full and lasting peace. The newly elected leader of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, has publicly denounced terrorism and has vowed to both crack down on militants and to root out corruption in the Palestinian Authority. Similarly, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has demonstrated his commitment to peace by preparing for the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from all 21 settlements in Gaza and four in the West Bank. Although the realization of a full and lasting peace in Israel remains distant, we must embrace these developments as a reflection of the cautious optimism embodied in Israel's national anthem, *Hatikvah*, which means "the hope." We hope that Israel will continue to serve as the "light unto the nations" that Herzl envisioned more than a century ago and that Israel's 58th year will be a time of peace throughout the region.

IDEAS ON RETIREMENT SECURITY

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I wish to submit for the RECORD this article that appeared in the Hartford Courant on May 9, 2005. It poses the idea of investing the Social Security surplus in the financial markets. The future of Social Security would be addressed through the strength of these markets without the uncertainties of the stability of individual private accounts. The author also addresses some of the concerns that have been raised about this idea.

As you can see, there are many thoughts that can be brought to the table to address the future of Social Security and to utilize the forces of the financial markets without being wedded to private accounts. Additionally, there are many issues surrounding personal retirement savings and pension security that deserve to be looked at carefully.

[From the Hartford Courant, May 10, 2005]

PUSH-BUTTON PICKS JUST TOO SIMPLE

(By Dan Haar)

The Social Security private accounts tour passed through Hartford Monday with some downhome remarks from Treasury Secretary John W. Snow that called to mind H. Ross Perot, who sounded open-minded but wasn't. Snow was in town pushing President Bush's scheme to move much of the Social Security trust fund into private accounts, where you and I can watch our retirement accounts grow and wither and maybe grow back again.

The private accounts would cost an estimated \$2 trillion to set up, and they would do nothing on their own to fill the Social Security shortfall. These are not points of debate.

Still, Snow said, "I challenge all of our critics to say, if you think you've got a better idea, what is it?"

He added, echoing Perot without the irony of anatomy, "We're all ears."

Well there is a better idea—but sadly, the administration is all fists in fighting it back. That's because private accounts are not on the list of features the Bush folks are willing to do without.

The idea behind the private accounts is that workers could choose to invest their money in stocks, not just the long-term bonds the trust fund uses today. Over time, on average, company shares earn higher returns than bonds. Social Security could meet its obligations without raising payroll taxes, and poof! We wipe out much of our \$11 trillion deficit.

If tapping into the stock markets would work in private accounts, why can't it work for the trust fund as a whole? Why can't the fund simply set a target of stockownership—say, 25 percent—and gradually ramp up to that target, without giving Aunt Martha fits over the state of her personal account?

The financial results would be identical to Bush's plan.

The start-up cost would be lower because it could be done over a period of years.

Aunt Martha, who may already have plenty of worries about her 401(k) and other private savings, could rely on a predictable stream of retirement income, no matter what—just like uncle Chester had back in the day.

The fund could achieve returns based on decisions by the best and brightest financial minds—not the twitches of a nervous household, multiplied by 100 million.

Last week, a ranking Treasury official told me the problem is that Social Security would end up meddling in the stock markets—a dangerous thing if, say, someone in power wanted to help or hurt General Electric Co.

But that worry is easy to wave off with a pair of laws even this Congress would pass without much debate: All stocks must be part of broad index funds, and never could the Social Security Administration vote in company proxies.

On Monday, Snow produced another answer: Allowing the fund to invest as a whole in stocks produces a short-term surplus, "and short-term surpluses become subject to the spending proclivities of Congress."

"This," Snow said of the private accounts, now echoing Al Gore, "is a lock-box."

It's true that Congress—and our free-spending president, by the way—have borrowed heavily from today's Social Security surpluses. But it's hard to believe that federal spending rises just because the surplus is there. It rises because we have rising needs, and because the political system we have causes it to rise.

Anyway, there are better ways to rein in federal spending than to needlessly take trillions of dollars out of the system and put them in a place—your hands and mine—where they will cause new grief. The administration's real goal here is not to advance Social Security, but to push its social agenda, the so-called "ownership society."

Funny, median family income adjusted for inflation—the most important measure of how typical Americans are doing—has fallen three straight years and is headed for a fourth as Bush showers tax breaks on companies that aren't hiring. Whose ownership society is this?

Democrats and their allies at AARP in the Social Security debate have offered little in the way of real solutions. John Rother, director of policy and strategy for AARP—defending his hilariously exaggerated, slam-dunk anti-personal account TV ad cam-

paign—told me the idea of allowing the trust fund to invest more broadly makes sense.

But he said the public isn't ready for that discussion.

Despite the lack of a cohesive public debate, the trust fund investment idea may emerge as a dark horse. On Monday, the Yale School of Management announced a working paper by finance professor Will Goetzmann that shows exactly how such a system might work.

Goetzmann envisioned an independent agency, similar to Fannie Mae, that would manage the Social Security fund. It could issue its own bonds and sell contracts, like annuities. It could invest in all sorts of sophisticated instruments that individual accounts couldn't touch, such as commercial real estate, commodity indexes and short-term Treasury notes.

Goetzmann calculated a portfolio mix that would most closely mirror the rise in U.S. wages. That's the measure Social Security uses to set payouts to retirees.

"It's a fairly broadly diversified portfolio," Goetzmann said Monday.

Setting the right investment mix, he said, "is a very sophisticated question that is not going to be answered with a few oversimplified choices on a menu."

And getting to that point in the debate will not happen as long as we have officials on both sides who give us an oversimplified menu of political arguments, and nothing more.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Israel Independence Day. This young country, now 57 years old and surrounded by hostile neighbors on each of its borders, has stood as a bulwark of democracy throughout its history.

On this day we honor the people of Israel, who struggle daily to maintain freedom and independence. Throughout the country's short history, Israelis have fought against unfathomable odds to reestablish the birthplace of the Jewish People. Today, Israel stands strong and prosperous, longing to live in peace and security. Today we also remember and pay tribute to the strong bond of friendship and support between the United States and the State of Israel.

I am proud to have visited Israel and to have seen firsthand the courage and steadfast resolve of its people. I look forward to a time when we will be able to join Israel in the celebration of a more peaceful and secure Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that all Americans will join me in congratulating the citizens of Israel and the entire Jewish community on the 57th anniversary of the birth of the State of Israel.

IN HONOR OF ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on Yom Ha'atzmaut to

congratulate the Israeli people for a remarkable history and to celebrate the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

In just 57 years, a land mainly comprised of desert has been transformed into fertile farmland, thriving communities and world-class cities. Industry and technology have boomed and most significantly, millions of Jews have returned to live in their ancestral homeland.

A robust democracy has developed around the ideals of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, fair elections and an independent justice system. In fact, it is the only nation in the region to accomplish this.

Brave soldiers have fought to defend their brethren and innocent civilians have courageously endured the constant threat of attack—all to live freely in their homeland. And, despite this constant threat, the Israeli people remain committed to a peaceful coexistence with their neighbors—a testament to their resolute and compassionate spirit.

As remarkable as Israel's short history is, we must not take its existence for granted. While recent events have sparked new optimism in the peace process, radical terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, emboldened by Iranian and Syrian support, are as committed as ever to their core goal: the eradication of Israel. And by now, we are all too familiar with the daunting task of protecting innocent people from suicide bombers.

Despite this reality, Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli people plan to move forward with an historic and courageous plan to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank this summer.

As Israel moves forward with efforts to live with its neighbors in peace and security, it is crucial that we continue to stand by her.

We must defend Israel's right to engage in legitimate acts of self-defense to prevent terrorist attacks in Israel;

We must stand up for Israel when our international allies and other members of the international community unfairly criticize her;

We must hold Syria, Iran, and any other country that aid and harbor terrorists, accountable; and

We must push President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership to match Prime Minister Sharon's courage by taking steps to end corruption, crack down on terrorist organizations and end the media incitement that encourages hatred and violence.

Support for Israel has been one issue consistently agreed upon by both Republicans and Democrats, through many different administrations and many different times. I am proud that this support remains so strong today.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honor to stand by Israel and I know my colleagues join me in expressing Mazel Tov for a remarkable 57 years.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to join my colleagues in the United States Congress and world leaders in celebrating the creation of the State of Israel on this 57th anniversary of Israel's Independence